Top Trends in Technology

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THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology has the potential to improve every aspect of a nonprofit's operations, but where do you start? What is most important?

Time is precious to development professionals, and perhaps even more so to your high-value constituents. How do you know where you should invest the majority of your resources — time and money alike? Where should you rely on technology the most?

Although your challenges may be numerous and ever-evolving, there are a few key areas in which technology can really make a difference.

EXPANDING NETWORKS & PLATFORMS

The need to raise more money despite ever-increasing challenges means expanding your base — getting in touch with more prospects, with stronger inclination and propensity to support your organization — and getting them engaged in your fundraising program faster.

1. **Online Presence —** As we all know much too well (the authors unfortunately included), the web offers an infinite amount of ways to spend our time, and equally infinite means of marketing your message and mission. With individuals spending more and more time online every day, your website must offer virtual education, opportunity, and stewardship, as well as a compelling experience that will consistently engage users to visit the site, click through on an email campaign, or follow up on a social message, rather than doing one of an infinite number of other options. With that in mind, every option and design element presented to a user should be meaningful and relevant to your brand, mission, and desired outcomes for that user's visit. Usability Experience specialists now argue for testing in eye movements, with page views being too long an increment to be useful, meaning that visitors should learn about your organization and the service it provides and be given an opportunity to donate in a self-service, secure environment that produces immediate acknowledgement. Perhaps more importantly, users should feel as though they have experienced something — helping the hungry, housing the homeless, fighting illness — providing a compelling reason for coming back. Integrating the design of usability, information, and data is the perhaps the quickest win in terms of making an immediate and measurable impact on constituents — and the only way to get users to return.

2. **Social Networking —** In a few short years, social networks have gone from strictly the domain of users with ".edu" email addresses to being almost universal — so much so that the rare individual not on Facebook® or LinkedIn® is very much the exception to the rule. Nonprofits are starting to realize how social networks could provide the ability to spread their missions to the masses, as well as serve as a supplementary or even primary acquisition channel. Not only can you deliver updates and announcements, you can leverage those who join your network and ask them to pass on the word — the key to the Network Effect. Keep in mind that the rules on social networking are completely different; in some ways you're

Executive Summary

As a nonprofit, you face a complex and evolving environment. New organizations each day make competition fiercer, while a trend in the privatization of funding sources has created myriad challenges for building a case for funding and demonstrating results to maintain funding levels year over year. Your donors are different, too. A "thank you" letter is the bare minimum standard for stewardship. Today's donor wants to better understand and engage in your mission. And because of this increased interest and involvement, individual donors, as well as funders, have an increased focus on accountability, outcomes, and evaluation, as well. To keep your organization alive and in the forefront of your donors' minds despite these challenges, you may feel the need to reinvent your approach to fundraising — either upgrading areas of operations that seem to be under-serving staff, constituents, and beneficiaries, or reevaluating your programs as a whole. Technology can play a key role in efforts to enhance, optimize, or reengineer processes and operations.

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dealing with a different breed of constituent, not necessarily a donor or even a prospect in the traditional sense, and your opportunity to engage is shorter and more ephemeral than ever. That said, the fundamentals familiar to any fundraiser still apply: People engage with those recommended by friends and others they trust, and, as both veteran fundraisers and social media strategists can agree — relationships begin with conversations based on listening and meaningful engagement rather than one-way dialogue.

3. **Mobilization —** You are on the move; so are your fundraisers, and so are your constituents. In this era of smart phones and mobile technology, it is crucial to deliver accurate, up-to-date information on your prospects and donors in real time. Gone are the days of memos and carbon copies delivered through interoffice mail to a data management team, with information being stuck in processing for weeks. Mobile Major Giving tools are no longer a "nice-to-have" — there's an app for that, and donors are coming to expect that your staff have access to latest and greatest details when on the road. Canvassers and solicitors need a means to file call reports in real time and input data directly into the system, cutting off unnecessary wait times for processing and identifying new opportunities at the same time.

DIVERSIFYING FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

Changes in our economic and political landscape have made it critical to diversify fundraising efforts and expand your strategy beyond the annual appeal, board fundraising, or whatever else was "good enough" in the past. Today's successful strategies are multi-channel and multi-faceted, using technology to strategically engage across constituencies. The foundation of a diversified fundraising program remains built on solid relationship management principles, but once that is in place, opportunities abound.

1. **Peer-to-Peer —** No one can better promote your organization than those who already believe in your mission and have a built-in network of high-propensity prospects. Your best fundraisers are those who can ask their friends and family to support you. We all know it is harder to say "no" to someone you know rather than a stranger, and the explosion of peer-to-peer fundraising on the event scene has further normalized this channel of giving. The standard today is providing the tools for your event registrants to ask others to support their participation and monitor progress against their own fundraising goal — in person, through email, or via social tools online — but don't limit this fundraising opportunity to events only.

2. **Donor Empowered —** Peer-to-peer fundraising started with events, but it has gone far past that. Independent Fundraising Events — enabled by providing peer-to-peer tools to your most inspired advocates, donors, and fundraisers, without being tied to an event, or even without the support of the organization — are a rapidly growing trend. Additionally, providing simple tools that allow donors to make gifts in lieu of wedding, anniversary, birthday, or graduation presents, tied in with a thoughtful and subtle campaign promoting such a feature, has the ability to inject vitality into fundraising and friend-raising efforts as well. Even more traditional organizations can benefit from providing simple fundraising tools, workflows, and relevant data to board members or other key stakeholders through mobile applications, giving them the power to expand fundraising reach on your behalf.

3. **Interactive Stewardship —** Who doesn't like to see their name in lights? Whether it be online or offline, your stewardship should be immediate, complete, and meet the donor's requirements. Your website is the perfect opportunity to publish your annual report,

About the Author

One of the founding members of Blackbaud's Interactive Services team, **Bo Crader** works in various capacities as a business architect and advisor on Enterprise implementations, integrated CRM projects, and design and strategy initiatives. Recent projects include developing a multi-site rollout approach for a large healthcare organization, advising on the launch of a rebranding effort for a national federated nonprofit, and leading an Enterprise-wide organizational and technical assessment. An eight-year Blackbaud veteran, Bo has held positions as communications manager, senior Internet solutions consultant, and business solutions manager, and he worked previously in journalism, information technology, and served in the military. Specific areas of expertise include interactive strategy, emerging technologies, solution architecture and design, and project planning. Bo has been published in a number of publications on topics such as technology and fundraising, including his article co-authored with Kristen Fulks "Technology Trends in the Donor Lifecycle" in the March 2010 issue of Advancing Philanthropy. A sought after speaker, Bo is requested for his knowledge in technology servicing nonprofits. Bo holds a Master's degree from the University of Georgia, where he is also a Phi Beta Kappa graduate. He is a frequent volunteer and advocate in his local community of Charleston, South Carolina.

virtual donor giving walls, and acknowledgement of giving, showcasing donors rather than burying them in the back of a newsletter or report. Benchmark your website against other nonprofits, keeping in mind that constituents are comparing your site against their bank and the latest social networking sites. How do the most popular sites keep their best constituents top-of-mind online? Do you provide interactive features related to your annual report to demonstrate accountability and make the linkage to outcomes more tangible? Can donors access full gift history, or make recommendations on the use of donor advised fund information?

ENRICHING THE COMPOSITION AND MEANING OF DATA

Your fundraising efforts are only as good as your data, so it is important to focus efforts on the state of the information powering your systems and programs; don't let your results be limited by poor integrity or bad information management practices. Technology and data services ensure a complete view of your constituents at your fingertips. Services today allow you to append and update missing pieces of information.

1. **Single Supporter Database —** Your donors expect you to know everything about them, so your database should reflect a holistic view of involvement. Not only should you be able to see donation history, you should be able to tell if someone participates in events, volunteers, is an advocate, and understand whom else they know. These relationships and their extended involvement indicate just how invested they are with your organization. A single supporter database provides staff with the functionality necessary to manage their activities and becomes one-stop shopping for the comprehensive view of a constituent.

2. **Data Enrichment —** What gem is hidden in your database? Wouldn't it be nice to know more about your prospects and donors? Data can be enriched in many ways: biographical updates, wealth screening, and advanced screenings to identify specific candidates for planned giving or other giving programs are just a few. It no longer has to be a shot in the dark to build a strategic plan for cultivation. Many organizations participate in regular screenings such as National Change of Address® or other screenings, but not everyone gets this data added back into their system. There is no added benefit for a vendor to keep this information, or for it to remain in a spreadsheet on someone's desk. These updates must go back into the system for your entire staff to capitalize on it. The results of a National Change of Address® update makes sure your direct mail efforts, as well as smaller mailings, run on the most up-to-date addresses.

3. **Advanced Reporting & Accountability —** Internally and externally, organizations must be able to account for all of the funds raised and how they were used. Even with the additional industry regulations in place, it is even more important to be able to answer to your constituents about every dollar raised. With one single supporter database, every staff member is able to answer the question with the same answer.

CONCLUSION

Seem important? It all is — as well as eMarketing, text messaging, data mining, interactive advocacy, and dozens of other emerging and always-evolving technologies. But, perhaps more important than any one technology is the strategic "fit" between the technologies you choose to deploy. That will determine the best use of your resources — staff, funding, board, donor, and otherwise — for your organization.

About the Author

Kristen Fulks joined Blackbaud in 2002 with a broad range of fundraising experience and thorough understanding of all levels of nonprofit operations. Prior to Blackbaud, Kristen served as Executive Director of the Gateway Charitable Foundation in Chicago, Illinois. She also worked for the Chicago Historical Society and Providence-St. Mel School. At Blackbaud, Kristen specializes in assessment, systems implementation, strategy development, business process improvement, and customer-side tactical administration of The Raiser's Edge and Blackbaud CRM. She has served in the principal consulting and project management capacity on some of Blackbaud's largest projects. She has international fundraising experience, working with customers in the Bahamas, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Kristen was honored as the Peer MVP at Blackbaud's annual meeting in January 2006. Kristen serves as a consulting manager for our healthcare and human services vertical. Kristen earned a BA in Communication Studies and a BA in Human Development & Family Life from the University of Kansas. She is based in Chicago, Illinois.

RESOURCES

Building a long-term technology plan isn't easy, so choose a partner carefully. Here are some resources to help you get started:

Blackbaud Social™: Blackbaud Social bridges the gap between public and privately branded social websites to make organizations more effective at constituent acquisition and retention. It seamlessly integrates with Blackbaud Sphere®, creating the most comprehensive online solution for social media, email marketing, online event management, website management, and advocacy. Visit www.blackbaud.com/social to learn more.

Blackbaud Professional Services: We've been helping nonprofits build and run effective technology strategies for 25 years. Over that time, we've helped hospitals, churches, universities, service programs, advocacy groups, and nonprofits of every type craft and execute effective strategies that leverage social media. Visit www.blackbaud.com/services/designservices/bbi_overview.aspx to learn more.

Blackbaud® NetCommunity™: Blackbaud NetCommunity gives users the infrastructure they need to publish and maintain engaging websites, as well as run targeted, effective email campaigns. Moreover, its Wave functionality lets you offer a complete user network on your website and makes it easy for your users to share your story via social media channels where they already participate. Visit www.blackbaud.com/bb/bbnc/wave.aspx to learn more.

Blackbaud Sphere®: With the industry's leading API-based open platform, Sphere Events® and Sphere eMarketing® are well suited for organizations that want to create "mashup" integrations with social media properties throughout the web. Even without doing a thing, Sphere Events is deployed with built-in integrations to Twitter®, Facebook®, and YouTube® to ensure that your organization can optimize its reach and impact.

Friends Asking Friends®: Part of Sphere Events, Friends Asking Friends is designed to support your walkathon and other "team" fundraising events. Your organization can quickly and easily launch an online fundraising site complete with email capabilities, configurable individual and team pages, donation support, pledging, and comprehensive reporting and bookkeeping services.

eTapestry® Online CRM: Blackbaud's web-delivered CRM is a great fit for smaller organizations looking to get started quickly, control costs, and avoid buying servers to run their software. It comes with powerful built-in APIs that you can use to link to the rest of the Web without incurring extra charges. www.etapestry.com/node/726

The Raiser's Edge®: The Raiser's Edge has been the nonprofit industry's standard-bearing fundraising system for more than 20 years. It comes with a powerful set of APIs and powerful native integrations to both Blackbaud® NetCommunity™ and Blackbaud Sphere™, making it a great choice for nonprofits looking for a total solution. You can start your investigation here: www.blackbaud.com/products/fundraising/raisersedge.aspx.

About Blackbaud

Blackbaud is the leading global provider of software and services designed specifically for nonprofit organizations, enabling them to improve operational efficiency, build strong relationships, and raise more money to support their missions. Approximately 24,000 organizations — including University of Arizona Foundation, American Red Cross, Cancer Research UK, The Taft School, Lincoln Center, Tulsa Community Foundation, Ursinus College, Earthjustice, International Fund for Animal Welfare, and the WGBH Educational Foundation — use one or more Blackbaud products and services for fundraising, constituent relationship management, financial management, website management, direct marketing, education administration, ticketing, business intelligence, prospect research, consulting, and analytics. Since 1981, Blackbaud's sole focus and expertise has been partnering with nonprofits and providing them the solutions they need to make a difference in their local communities and worldwide. Headquartered in the United States, Blackbaud also has operations in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. For more information, visit www.blackbaud.com.

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